

Dame Meera Syal is starry-eyed for our summery fish, fennel and saffron stew



[theme music plays]

ANGELA HARTNETT: Coming up on Dish

NICK GRIMSHAW: With Dame Meera Syal.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I mean, it was a bit weird that the man I would go on to marry was playing my grandson, but when we're—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, there is that.

ANGELA HARTNETT: *[laughs]*

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: That's, that's acting, isn't it?

DAME MEERA SYAL: We'll

NICK GRIMSHAW: That's acting.

ANGELA HARTNETT: That's acting.

DAME MEERA SYAL: We'll move swiftly from that.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Is there anything you have to do or superstitions before a show?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Apart from a really big poo. Um—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, big poo.

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: But we heard that it was Queen Elizabeth's favourite show?

DAME MEERA SYAL: And she was asked, what are you watching at the moment? What's your favourite programme? And she said, *[in a posh British accent]* “I rather like that Kumars at number 42, that old lady. She's very funny.”

ANGELA HARTNETT: *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: I'm obsessed with that.

[theme music plays]

NICK GRIMSHAW: Dish from Waitrose is a Cold Glass production. This podcast may contain some strong language and adult themes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: *[laughing]* Hello, welcome to Dish from Waitrose. I'm Nick Grimshaw.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And I'm Angela Hartnett.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Hello, Angela Hartnett.

ANGELA HARTNETT: [*laughs*] Why are you doing this?

NICK GRIMSHAW: Wa- Waving. I'm waving—

ANGELA HARTNETT: [*laughs*]

NICK GRIMSHAW: Because you can watch it. Hello, if you're watching, if you're listening, I'm waving. Hello. I do wave on the radio.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Do you?

NICK GRIMSHAW: When I get on, I say like, “Morning!”

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh, bless your cotton socks.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Probably do that on the phone as well.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Probably, yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Like a little wave.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Hi!

ANGELA HARTNETT: Bye.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Um, how are you, Ange?

ANGELA HARTNETT: I'm very well, thanks.

NICK GRIMSHAW: You, okay?

ANGELA HARTNETT: I'm good, and you?

NICK GRIMSHAW: I am good, yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Back from your hols?

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yes, back from holidays.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Good times?

NICK GRIMSHAW: Great time.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: We went to Los Angeles.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Los Angeles. La La land.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Funny old place, isn't it?

ANGELA HARTNETT: Never been.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh yeah, it's okay. But listen, when I got there, we landed on like the Friday.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: We went out for dinner on the Friday night, and as we were leaving dinner, or the table next to us were leaving actually, they were like *[in an American accent]* “Sorry, I just want to say, um, we love Dish.”

ANGELA HARTNETT: *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: “We love Ange.” And I was like, “Oh!”

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh!

NICK GRIMSHAW: I forgot it's on here.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Forgot it's on here.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, I never thought about that.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah people know it. I know.

NICK GRIMSHAW: And then we were like, “That was weird.” And they were like, *[in an American accent]* “We love Ange, we don't want to interrupt your dinner.” Blah blah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: And I was like, “Oh, okay, bye.” So, we had our, they were really nice. Um, we went to bed, woke up the next morning at like genuinely—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: —like half 4.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, of course.

NICK GRIMSHAW: And then waited until like the supermarket opened at 6, went for a juice. The lady that made the juice was like, *[in an American accent]* “Oh my God, Dish Guy—”

ANGELA HARTNETT: *[laughs]*

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: —where's Ange?!” And then all people came out like, *[in an American accent]* “Whey! Dish Guy! Where's Ange!”

ANGELA HARTNETT: Do they expect us to travel together?

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, I think people think we're together as a couple. Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: At the hip.

NICK GRIMSHAW: But yeah, I forgot Dish was on. Anyway, so much Dish chat.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Lovely.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I went to this great thing at the Hollywood Bowl.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: It was like the music of Wes Anderson films. And queuing up to go in there and people were *like [in an American accent]* “Oh my God, Dish Guy.”

ANGELA HARTNETT: Dish Guy. I love the way you're Dish Guy.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Dish Guy.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Dish Guy. Dish Guy.

NICK GRIMSHAW: *[in an American accent]* “Hey! Welcome back to Dish Guy!”

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: *[in an American accent]* “Dish Guy and Chef Ange!”

ANGELA HARTNETT: They would say Chef Ange! You were also spotted. We have a little listener email.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: “Hi Nick and Angela.”

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yes.

ANGELA HARTNETT: “We've just come back from an amazing family trip to California, and on the way home we queued to check into our LA-London Heathrow—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —flight behind Nick and Mesh!”

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: “I was desperate to say hi and let you know that I downloaded the latest—

NICK GRIMSHAW: *[gasp]*

ANGELA HARTNETT: —episode to listen in to on the flight but decided to leave you at peace on your holiday instead.”

NICK GRIMSHAW: Aw.

ANGELA HARTNETT: “And so now we're home, I'm curious, was it chicken teriyaki or macaroni cheese for you? Love the pod, Sarah.”

NICK GRIMSHAW: Thank you, Sarah. Hi, Sarah. Well, neither, because I have to have the gluten-free option.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Is it not really neither because you were up in business?

[everyone laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: No, thank you. Um, no, thank you, Angela.

ANGELA HARTNETT: So, you were sitting in economy, were you?

NICK GRIMSHAW: I did the middle one.

[everyone laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, I know, I had like the gluten-free whatever meal that was.

ANGELA HARTNETT: What about Mesh? What did he have?

NICK GRIMSHAW: I have no idea.

ANGELA HARTNETT: No idea.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I'm not paying attention to that.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Okay, all right. Just checking!

NICK GRIMSHAW: No idea what he had.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Neil and I always have a little look. What are you having?

NICK GRIMSHAW: Do you?

ANGELA HARTNETT: What are you choosing?

NICK GRIMSHAW: You can't remember what meal Neil had on your last flight together.

ANGELA HARTNETT: I bet you I can. I had the chicken salad thing. Actually, you're right, I have no idea what Neil had.

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: I knew it.

ANGELA HARTNETT: I'm trying to think.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I knew it.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Actually, I was sitting—

NICK GRIMSHAW: I knew it.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —next to him and playing cards, but I can't remember what he ate.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Hey, today we have a great guest.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Very exciting.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Dame Meera Syal—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: —is gonna be joining us on Dish. She's written a memoir—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –called Vigilauntie, a memoir in it–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –which I love. She's rehearsing right now for a new play.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: We've also got to talk to her about Goodness Gracious Me and–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Number–

ANGELA HARTNETT: The Kumars.

NICK GRIMSHAW: The Kumars at Number 42.

ANGELA HARTNETT: She's written more books. One of her books is on the national curriculum.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Curriculum. yes.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Anita and Me.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Absolutely. So, we've got a lot to talk to about.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Before we welcome Dame Meera Syal in.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Um, what are we going to talk about ingredient-wise?

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh, so we have, um, saffron.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I like how they've presented it on ice here.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Ice cube. Well, that will steep it, you see.

NICK GRIMSHAW: What do you mean?

ANGELA HARTNETT: So basically, when you get saffron—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: –you need to basically dilute the flavour of the saffron in a sense. So, the best way to do it is to grind it. So, you crush down these saffron flakes or shards if you like, and that will give you more flavour, increases sort of the surface area and unlocks all the aromas.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: You can either do that and then pour hot water onto it.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yes.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Or you can do it over ice cubes. And apparently if you do it over ice, what it tends to do is lock the flavours into a more concentrated liquid–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: –as opposed to when you do it with boiling water.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh yeah. So, what would I put saffron in? It's making me feel like the Spanish dishes.

ANGELA HARTNETT: You can put it in–

NICK GRIMSHAW: A lot of Spanish dishes like paella.

ANGELA HARTNETT: –things like paella.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: You can put it in lots of fish stews–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: –things like Bouillabaisse.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: You can put it in risottos. It goes well with chicken.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yes, risotto.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Saffron rice, saffron chicken, lots of things. It's got quite an intense flavour–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: –I find. I think you know when saffron's in a dish.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yes.

ANGELA HARTNETT: But I think it can really balance with other things. You can put it in curries.

NICK GRIMSHAW: And then, so how much would you use today when you're doing your stew?

ANGELA HARTNETT: Literally, I'm gonna use–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Like a tiny bit–

ANGELA HARTNETT: –a pinch.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –a pinch.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Nice pinch. So probably, you know–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Half of that?

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh no, less. Even–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Less?

ANGELA HARTNETT: –a quarter. Yeah, it's very, look, that. Yeah, that's quite a lot.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Wow. Okay–

ANGELA HARTNETT: You don't need loads of it.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I can't remember what I bought it for, but I definitely remember buying it, because it feels like it's now in it.

ANGELA HARTNETT: We put it in the chicken for Nick Mohammed. We had saffron in there.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh, maybe that's what I bought it for 'cause I made that.

ANGELA HARTNETT: To make that, yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Um, okay, well, let's welcome our guest. Time to welcome Dame Meera Syal to Dish.

[theme music plays]

[applause]

NICK GRIMSHAW: Hi, Meera—

DAME MEERA SYAL: Hello.

NICK GRIMSHAW: —how are you? Nice to see you.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Thanks so much for having me.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh my God—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Lovely to see you.

NICK GRIMSHAW: —thank you for coming.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mwah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Mwah. Oh, two now.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh, wow.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I brought you some flowers.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Gosh, that's—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Meera!

ANGELA HARTNETT: –so incredible, they're beautiful.

DAME MEERA SYAL: 'Cause you can't– Well, you can't come to someone's house and be fed–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Aw.

ANGELA HARTNETT: That's so kind, thank you.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –and not give them anything.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh Meera, that is so nice.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And I've made some lemon polenta cake.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh, fabulous!

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh my God, thank you.

DAME MEERA SYAL: So, I chose polenta because I know you can't have flour. So it's um–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Aw.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Allergies.

ANGELA HARTNETT: You're too kind. We're going to eat that.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh my God, thank you so much.

ANGELA HARTNETT: We're gonna put that with our dessert.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh yeah-

ANGELA HARTNETT: The cake looks fabulous.

NICK GRIMSHAW: —we can have that for dessert. Well, thank you, that's so kind. Come on in, come on in, and we'll get you, get you sat.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Thank you very much.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh, I love that you baked. Thanks, Meera.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh, well, it was a—

NICK GRIMSHAW: That's so nice.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —very last-minute thing because I'm in the middle of rehearsals at the moment. So—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Don't you cook a lot when you're or bake when you're learning lines and rehearsing.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I do.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It's a weird thing, I don't know. It's, um, one of those things that if sometimes when you're doing something—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Uh-huh.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —else, something practical—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —it kind of goes in better.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Wow.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I don't know why.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, re-focuses.

NICK GRIMSHAW: That could not be me.

[theme music plays]

NICK GRIMSHAW: Shall we welcome our guest, Angela?

ANGELA HARTNETT: We shall indeed, yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Are you ready—

DAME MEERA SYAL: *[laughs]*

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –for a serious guest today? A Dame–

ANGELA HARTNETT: A Dame.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Another Dame on the show.

ANGELA HARTNETT: I know.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Um–

ANGELA HARTNETT: We're clocking them out the Dames.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –we have had some–

[laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: –some great Dames. We've had Berry, Lumley–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Lumley. *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: –Leith.

ANGELA HARTNETT: *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: I don't think you can surname a Dame.

ANGELA HARTNETT: No, it feels very rude.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I think you've got to give the full name. Please, uh, another legendary Dame, please. Meera Syal is here everybody.

[cheering and applause]

NICK GRIMSHAW: Dame Meera, hello!

ANGELA HARTNETT: Hello, welcome.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Welcome to Dish.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Welcome.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Thank you, I am thrilled to be here.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Aw.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh, my goodness, I love your podcast, I love food, I love being cooked for—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Aw.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —which is such a treat.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Well, thank you for coming.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Thank you.

NICK GRIMSHAW: We were dead excited you were coming to see us.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Aw, thanks.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Um, we're starting with this, which I feel like we should have now because it's frozen—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: And when we're recording this, it's like 35—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: —degrees.

ANGELA HARTNETT: So hot.

NICK GRIMSHAW: So, we're having a frozen mango and passion fruit lassi. It's a Ravinder Bhogal recipe and it is Greek yoghurt, mango, some passion fruit, and lime. That's good.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And Ravinder, I know, is passionate about mangoes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes.

ANGELA HARTNETT: She loves mango.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I love Ravinder.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh my God.

ANGELA HARTNETT: She is wonderful, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And I love Jikoni.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: She's a genius. So, I'm not surprised it's her recipe.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Thank you.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh yeah, that's good.

[crew laughs]

ANGELA HARTNETT: That's delicious.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Really good.

DAME MEERA SYAL: That is delicious.

NICK GRIMSHAW: How are you? How is life for you at the moment?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Busy.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Busy, uh, yeah. I'm in the middle of rehearsing—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —a fantastic play called The Children.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yes.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: At the Lyric Hammersmith, which opens the same day that my memoir comes out, so.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh wow.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah, I know.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Great timing.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I know.

ANGELA HARTNETT: It's gonna be a busy day for you.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, busy day. And how'd you enjoy this bit before, like the learning of the lines and getting your character ready-

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: -all of that bit? And you, you're apprehensive now because it's still a bit of, you know, a few weeks away.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes, we're still in the honeymoon phase.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And then about a week before we get into the theatre, we'll be in the “F*** it can't do it anymore stage.”

NICK GRIMSHAW: *[laughs]*

DAME MEERA SYAL: And then when we're in tech, it is the “F*** it, I can't even act anyway—

[everyone laughs]

DAME MEERA SYAL: —why am I doing this?”

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: “I should have been a doctor!”

[everyone laughs]

DAME MEERA SYAL: And then, you get on there—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —and the magic starts.

ANGELA HARTNETT: It all happens, yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: It just happens.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Or not. But still, it's, it's that thing.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It's that thing, that relationship with the audience.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Uh-huh.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I mean, you don't get that with anything else.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And it is addictive—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –and magical when it works.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: So, you just have to go through all the, you know–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –the squeaky bum bit.

NICK GRIMSHAW: The bit before.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah. And then once it starts, do you have that every day? Are you waking up some days being like, “Oh my God, I've got the theatre tonight.” Or is it once it starts, are you enjoying it?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah, yeah–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –you definitely get into a routine.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: You know, you become very close to a cast.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It's like your substitute family.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: You get your routines, your rituals. You know, actors are very superstitious—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —so we've all got our little things.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm. What do you have? Is there anything you have to do or superstitions before a show?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Apart from a really big poo.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, big poo.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Um—

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: It helps.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Always has.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Always has, darling. You don't want to go on full.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: *[laughs]*

DAME MEERA SYAL: I always make, it's just a thing I do, but I always make a playlist for my—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Okay.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —characters.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Because I think music is the quickest way into someone's soul.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And if you know the music they listen to, you kind of know who they are. So, I play that, in the dressing room, and then I have a little meditation-y thing before I go on, which is mainly calming. *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It's breathing and—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Uh-huh.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —calming because it's so easy to let the adrenaline just—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yes.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —you know.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Got to manage it.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, but that must keep you going—

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —throughout the whole season, the adrenaline and reacting to the audience, as you say, if everyone's a different night, isn't it?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes, but I did read something really interesting, and I kind of realised why, you know, a lot of creatives are a bit mad, and actors are even

more, bonkers sometimes is that the body doesn't know the difference between an imagined emotion and a real one.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh, yes.

DAME MEERA SYAL: So, when you're doing Hamlet for 3 and a half hours every night, your body thinks your dad really did die and you're gonna and you're gonna go around and kill people and then you'll be killed.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: So, it—

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: No wonder they're a bit out there.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: You know what—

ANGELA HARTNETT: It's a lot to put on your body.

NICK GRIMSHAW: And that daily fear—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Like, they don't know. It's like, I don't know, "I've got to interview someone famous."

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: They think it's like you're being chased by wolves.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Right.

[crew laughs]

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Like that fear, they don't, it doesn't go. Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah of course.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: It's the same. Do you get that, Ange, before you've got something big coming up? Do you ever wake up and be like, I can't do this?

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh, every time I come on the podcast.

[everyone laughs]

ANGELA HARTNETT: No, but of course you do. I get nervous, I think.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Uh-huh.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And I know when I, I know my level, if you like. I know what I'm really good at in food and I know what I need to work at, so you make sure you know what you don't know—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —if that makes sense.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: You know, you compensate.

DAME MEERA SYAL: But the great thing is you never stop learning.

ANGELA HARTNETT: No that's the brilliant thing.

DAME MEERA SYAL: That's the best thing, isn't it?

ANGELA HARTNETT: I agree, yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: That is key, I think.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, I think the moment you sit there and think, I know it all—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: –which always amazes me when I go out with friends, they go, “What's good on the menu? What's that?” I said, “I do not know everything about food. Can we just establish that?” You know.

NICK GRIMSHAW: What?!

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

[crew laughs]

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes, “Why not?!” Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Can I just say, that is I absolutely expect a female chef to say that. I don't think many male–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –chefs think that way.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: They do think they know it all.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: I think you probably are right there.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah, they think they can do it all with a blowtorch and a bit of sleight of hand.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh God.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Do you know what I mean?

ANGELA HARTNETT: They should blowtorch themselves.

[everyone laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: Interesting.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: There you go Angela. Now we—

ANGELA HARTNETT: No.

NICK GRIMSHAW: —should talk about the Dame element.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Like, when do you like to be addressed as a Dame? Do you like to be addressed as Dame Meera? When does it come in handy?

DAME MEERA SYAL: When does it come in handy?

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Um, well, I can drive my sheep over Westminster Bridge.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Well, that's very handy.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Which is really handy.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Always doing that.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Always.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I think sheep, I think Meera.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I mean, I haven't, I don't really use it.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And it's still a bit of a ooh when people—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –do use it. And inevitably I think of pantomime Dame.

ANGELA HARTNETT: *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: *[laughs]*

DAME MEERA SYAL: 'Cause I feel like that's my level really. But I suppose it's very symbolic.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It's very symbolic, 'cause I mean, I write about this in the memoir.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: So, the year I was offered my first award, which was an MBE—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –and that was the same year that I'd taken my dad back to, um, the home that he fled in Pakistan in 1947 with the partition—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Right.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –of India.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: So, my dad was a refugee, ended up in a refugee camp at the age of 13 with his 7 brothers and sisters, and they lost everything. And it's, um, you know, I think 2 million people died. That's only the ones they recorded. Biggest mass migration in human history so far in the 20th century. And I'd had a visceral experience of what Empire had done–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Of course.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –to my family and how it affected my dad–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –and the whole intergenerational trauma thing that comes down to–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –and then, you know, a few months later I was offered a Member of the British Empire, and it does make you go, whoa–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —oh, this is a bit of a mind f***.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: What do I do about this? And it was my parents' reaction that completely changed my mind, because they were absolutely overwhelmed by how in one generation a refugee from Empire could have a daughter who got acknowledged by the same system. And my dad had a memory of when he was a kid standing at the bars of this beautiful big house watching the memsahabs dance, walks around the lawn into an area they weren't allowed in as Indians and we visited that same building when we went back, and it's now a, the, public library.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And belongs to the people. And he went, “Well, who would have thought that?” In one generation.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Wow.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Did they come to the palace with you?

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh, amazing. Yeah, it was. And actually, so it was for them, it was like this bit of the Empire is for you.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And for your journey and all the sacrifices you made—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —so I could fly, you know.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Incredible that you had that and they were there to, you know, witness it—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: —and be there and go along with you.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I know.

NICK GRIMSHAW: It really is, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Although it was somewhat mitigated by the fact that my mum referred to it as the MEB—

[everyone laughs]

DAME MEERA SYAL: —which is everyone from my part of the world knows is the Midlands Electricity Board.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I love mums. I love that, yes.

ANGELA HARTNETT: I love it. I love it.

NICK GRIMSHAW: It is so good.

DAME MEERA SYAL: So thanks, Mum.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Now, one thing that you do have in common with our fellow Dames that have been guests, Prue Leith and Mary Berry—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: —is baking.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: You brought one today with baked goods—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: —which I can't wait to try. Ready for that.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh my God, I'm so nervous.

NICK GRIMSHAW: No, no, it's gonna be good.

ANGELA HARTNETT: It looks fabulous.

NICK GRIMSHAW: But you do like to bake when you are on projects for you to get in your mindset and to learn lines, but also for the crew and cast and stuff, yeah?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah, I do. I'm one of those people that, you know, bring in, it's a kind of real bonding thing.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It is, isn't it? I think that's one of the quickest ways to break down barriers—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Uh-huh.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —is just like--

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: “I've made you something!”

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And something sweet.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I was always fascinated by baking because coming from a Punjabi family, we don't bake.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: There's no concept—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Right.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —of an oven and baking—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —in our cuisine.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: So, I swear to God, I thought, and I think my mum thought, that the oven in our little cooker was to store pans—

[everyone laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: I love that.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —because that's all I ever saw it used for.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Uh-huh.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It's like when someone told me, no, you cook things in it-

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –blew my mind.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Hang on a second.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I know. And I grew up in a little mining village–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –in the Black Country, and so much of my upbringing revolved around food.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I mean, food is so central to my whole experience as a sort of kid. We had fresh Indian food every night that–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –my mum cooked, and she held down a full-time job. And then our weekends were full of aunties and uncles coming with, you know, a dish each.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: So, no one had, it was called [*in an Indian accent*] 'kitty party'.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: We used to call it. And ever, so no one had the pressure of making a whole meal.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, everyone shared.

DAME MEERA SYAL: The point is let's get together.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Get together and let's eat. Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And it was the pans on the table–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: No frill, no fuss. Get the plates out–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –rip off a bit of kitchen towel–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –everybody help themselves, you know.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And I just, you know, the memory of that communal experience and the friendship and the family, and I thought this is what food is for.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And I think more importantly for us, and particularly for my parents, food was a way of keeping the motherland alive.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Because they were so homesick and it was really hard to get the ingredients. I mean, my mum, they used to have to drive miles to find pepper.

NICK GRIMSHAW: *[laughs]*

DAME MEERA SYAL: This was the '60s in Britain.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Can you imagine?

ANGELA HARTNETT: Of course, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: You know, trying to find garlic—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —was like trying to score crack.

[everyone laughs]

DAME MEERA SYAL: “Do you know someone who's got some?!”

[everyone laughs]

DAME MEERA SYAL: It was madness—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —but it meant that much to them.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And so, and when they ate that food, they were eating—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —they were eating—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Well, they were eating home in a way, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It was memory.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Connecting with family yeah—

DAME MEERA SYAL: Right.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —of course.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And history and my mum used to make this for me.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: So—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Have you got all your mum's recipes?

DAME MEERA SYAL: I do.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh, that's amazing.

DAME MEERA SYAL: We made her, I haven't got my mum anymore, sadly, but we, this was, you know, during COVID got to write down all of our favourites.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Even, but you know, Indian mum, it's like a pinch of, or a handful.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Or a bit of that.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It's like, “How much, Mum? How much? Just tell me!”

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

[theme music plays]

NICK GRIMSHAW: We always ask our guests to give us their food likes and dislikes. Meera, let's go through yours. One thing I'd love to start talking about is bread.

DAME MEERA SYAL: *[gasps]*

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Uh, you said it's the one carb that you truly love.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I do.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Is bread.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Um, and I loved as well that you sort of used tea and toast as a sort of Valium, essentially.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah. *[laughs]*

ANGELA HARTNETT: *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah. Is that right?

DAME MEERA SYAL: You know me so well.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I think I'm paraphrasing. But, to take the edge off.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Or to ground you.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Maybe, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: That is so true.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: That is my meal of choice—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —meal, but to me it's a meal.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: When I come back from doing a show or in rehearsals, it's just like the thing that is just—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —gonna make me feel better is brilliantly, you know, lightly toasted bread, really good butter, and a strong cup—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —of tea.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: It's very like you're at home that.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah—

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —very much.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I feel like when you're talking about that, I'm imagining like a little—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: —bit of a blanket, it's raining outside.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm, sitting in front of the fire.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: It's cosy—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: —we're alone.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, yeah. *[laughs]*

DAME MEERA SYAL: We're alone.

[crew laughs]

ANGELA HARTNETT: No one's at home.

DAME MEERA SYAL: *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: Like yeah that is nice, yes. Um, we also found out that you could not live without cheese in most forms.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah, I love cheese.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Love cheese.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Especially strong cheese.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Strong cheese.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Right okay.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Do you have like a favourite?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Parmesan.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh, right okay, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I really, really, you don't need much else if you've got a really good Parmesan.

NICK GRIMSHAW: That's true.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: You just need a good bread, some olive oil, and some—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —really good tomato.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, easy.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I mean what else do you need?

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: What else do you need? Um, we also have here things that you love: tomatoes, olive oil, um, seafood, savoury, crunchy flavours.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: You put garlic and cumin in anything.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I think that's correct.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah. *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: And you also love curry leaves in anything.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: And huge fan of Indian food, particularly street food, although now I have to stay away from deep fried stuff.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I know.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Can't eat that anymore.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Um, but also Chaat is a favourite and pretty healthy.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It is actually.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Is that like the puffed rice situation?

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: No? Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: But I make it at home—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —but I make it with chickpeas—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —and boiled potatoes—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —chaat masala—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —pomegranate seeds.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yes.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Lots of coriander, onion.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Let's continue into Punjabi flavours, ginger, turmeric, cumin, garam masala, dishes like saag paneer and stuffed paratha. You make a saag paneer, right?

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I do.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Was that, was that your mum's recipe?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It was my mum's recipe.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Can we share?

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: We don't need the measurements.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh.

NICK GRIMSHAW: But what do you think makes it so good?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Well, she lightly fries the paneer—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —first.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh. So, it has a light little crust to it slightly.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Exactly that.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh. nice.

DAME MEERA SYAL: We don't like squidgy paneer.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Okay.

DAME MEERA SYAL: So, she light— She used to lightly fry it—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —in oil, cumin seeds, garlic—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –or mustard seeds, one or the other.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Depends if you want to crunch or not. Then she'd make the masala, the tarka–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –and then she'd add chopped fresh spinach.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh yes.

ANGELA HARTNETT: –yeah, that makes a difference.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And so, it's almost like a stir fry.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Uh-huh.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And so, it's, it's very light and fresh.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It's not like heavy.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I love saag paneer.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, I do actually.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah, me too.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, we need that one day on Dish.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Excuse me a moment.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Your great list continues. Also love tapas.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Um, you like to do that. You prefer to graze?

DAME MEERA SYAL: I do.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I love loads of different little—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —dishes—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —and flavours so you can pick choose. I'm not very good on a full-blown 3-course—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —you know, heavy thing. I hate over-rich, over-fussy food.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, I'm with you on that. Yeah, sashimi and carpaccio you love.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I do.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah. Has that been something you've always enjoyed?

DAME MEERA SYAL: No, I didn't eat a prawn till I was 18.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Uh-huh. And now you like all the raw stuff?

DAME MEERA SYAL: If you'd have told me when I was, you know—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —under 18 that I would like raw fish—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —I'd go, bugger off, never gonna eat that.

NICK GRIMSHAW: *[laughs]*

DAME MEERA SYAL: And I love it.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I love it. Yeah. And on the sweet side, we have a fondness for cardamom and rose flavours.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: In desserts and drinks.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: And then also, as you will see on our menu today, your favourite dessert is meringue.

DAME MEERA SYAL: But yeah, it's got to be chewy.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Chewy.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It's got to be that magical—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —thing that I can never get right because I have tried—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —which is that it's crisp on the outside but it's really—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —got texture—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —and you feel like you're eating a very chewy cloud.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yes. Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Well, when I got in, you'll be pleased to hear, I heard like, I thought it was drilling, but it was Ange making meringues.

[crew laughs]

DAME MEERA SYAL: *[gasp]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: So, they've been, they've been whipped, so it's going to be chewy.

ANGELA HARTNETT: I hope so.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Gotta be chewy.

[crew laughs]

DAME MEERA SYAL: I am so excited.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I'm so excited.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, well I'm excited for that.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, otherwise you have to be nice and go, oh yeah, it's really chewy.

DAME MEERA SYAL: *[laughs]*

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: We'll be like—

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: —how chewy is this?

DAME MEERA SYAL: *[laughs]*

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: Um, the dislikes list was, was just as good. You said anything with skin on.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I can't bear it.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Anything with the skin?

DAME MEERA SYAL: In fact, it's called skin is bad.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Right.

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: So, like-

DAME MEERA SYAL: You might as well say scab. Anything with the scab on.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Anything with a scab on.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I wouldn't eat.

NICK GRIMSHAW: You won't eat.

DAME MEERA SYAL: No.

NICK GRIMSHAW: So, like, sort of like what, a vegetable with the skin on, like an aubergine?

DAME MEERA SYAL: No, I mean the skin on—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Like milk and custard and stuff like that.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh, right, okay, right, yes.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I can't, even the thought of- Blegh.

NICK GRIMSHAW: It's skin-free at Dish today.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah, good—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Skin free.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —good.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Um, you said anything vaguely offal-like.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes, even the thought, I mean, I don't eat meat, I'm a pescatarian—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: But yes, when I've, I unfortunately once saw some tripe—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –and I've never forgotten it.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I've never forgotten the look of it.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm. Your email of likes and dislikes finished with a really beautiful paragraph that reads, I don't really like heavy, over-rich foods, all the fuss that goes around fine dining. I think the best cooks are usually women, correct? Yet most of the fated top chefs are men. I love the heroine cooks. All those mothers who rustle up miracles with limited ingredients and time are my inspirations.

DAME MEERA SYAL: That is very true.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Love that.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I'm glad you read that out.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Love that bit.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I wanna be cooked by–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –by those women that are, that like said, the heroine chefs–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –that just, thank you. Oh God, how beautiful.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Absolutely.

DAME MEERA SYAL: But look at like–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –I've got 6 ingredients in my pantry–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –and I've got 4 kids to feed.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Thank you, Ange.

DAME MEERA SYAL: What am I gonna do?

NICK GRIMSHAW: What we gonna do?

DAME MEERA SYAL: I mean, that's cooking to me.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: That's creativity.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Absolutely. Absolutely.

DAME MEERA SYAL: This looks amazing.

NICK GRIMSHAW: This is very for me I feel.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And it smells amazing.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, this is going to be good.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

[theme music plays]

NICK GRIMSHAW: The food has arrived.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: That looks so good, Angela.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Thank you.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It really does.

NICK GRIMSHAW: So, what have we got here?

ANGELA HARTNETT: So, we have a summery fish stew.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Fennel and saffron stew.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And it's a recipe by Eleanor Maidment.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And your base is garlic, fennel, and shallot. So, you finely chop all of those—

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —in olive oil, sweat that down for about 10 minutes. You can have a little bit of colour, a little bit of caramelisation.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Then you add your fennel seeds, your chopped tomatoes, cook those out for a couple of minutes, then add your white wine and allow that to reduce right down. So let it evaporate totally off, and then add your chicken stock or fish stock, and then you add a little bit of saffron. So basically, you've ground your saffron in the pestle and mortar—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —and then you add that in, and then you allow that to sort of cook for a few more minutes, then add your cod and cook all your cod—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh my God.

ANGELA HARTNETT: –in that beautiful broth, you see.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh, it's just, yeah. It's divine.

NICK GRIMSHAW: This is so delicious.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And you can taste every single layer of flavour.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And then you can serve it with crusty bread, a little bit of garlic aioli, which I didn't make, but it's available at Waitrose, lovely.

[crew laughs]

DAME MEERA SYAL: Absolutely.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I'm going in.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Um.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And the bread's warm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh my God, this is so for me.

ANGELA HARTNETT: There you go.

NICK GRIMSHAW: This is delicious.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It's—

NICK GRIMSHAW: I love this sort of thing.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —delicious.

ANGELA HARTNETT: But it's exactly what you were sort of describing. It's not lots of ingredients, but it's ingredients that all work together.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: You don't mess around with them. It's very quick to do.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm. I love this, Angela.

ANGELA HARTNETT: You love this?

DAME MEERA SYAL: I love it.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Bless you.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I love it.

NICK GRIMSHAW: It's so delicious, so tasty.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: And so light–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –and easy. Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: But like, so easy.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I mean.

[crew laughs]

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I'm sorry, I'm not going to be polite.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: No, I'm wanting to eat this.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I could not fancy anyone who didn't like food.

NICK GRIMSHAW: No.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

[crew laughs]

ANGELA HARTNETT: Well, you'd have a problem.

NICK GRIMSHAW: No, I think you would, yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Or like indifferent, like, mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: No.

NICK GRIMSHAW: No.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Even the way that somebody eats food—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —you know, it's like, oh, I can tell how sensual you are by—

NICK GRIMSHAW: *[laughs]*

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm. Wow, that is good.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: And saffron, what, I've never really cooked with saffron.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I feel like I have once because I've bought it, but it does work really well with like fish dishes, doesn't it?

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, it does.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And you can have it with meat dishes, like the classic one in Italy is the Milanese. You know, you do this lovely—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —saffron risotto. But it's quite a distinct flavour. You need to have it balanced with the dish—

DAME MEERA SYAL: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —because otherwise I think it'd be too overpowering. But you just need a little pinch.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I use it in, um, biryani.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It's good in biryani.

ANGELA HARTNETT: That would, yeah, that would be brilliant.

NICK GRIMSHAW: And then how long are we doing the cod in, in the stock?

ANGELA HARTNETT: Between about, depending on thickness of the cod, 5 to 7 minutes.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I always overcook my fish—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Same.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —and it comes out rubbery and very disappointing.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I know.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Also remember, fish carries on cooking like a meat does. You know, you all, you know, when everyone's saying you're resting your meat because you're allowing—

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —all the juices to rest—

DAME MEERA SYAL: I did not know that.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —the fish, because it's still got the heat—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: –it's retaining the heat and it's in a broth–

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh gosh.

ANGELA HARTNETT: –so it will carry on cooking for another sort of 30 seconds or something. So, whenever we cook fish in a pan, we always just put a spoon of the cooking oil over it–

NICK GRIMSHAW: And that carries it on.

ANGELA HARTNETT: –and then that carries it on cooking for the next sort of 30 seconds, you know.

DAME MEERA SYAL: That is an excellent tip.

NICK GRIMSHAW: And then would you only do cod with this, Ange? Could you do this with anything else, like prawns, maybe?

ANGELA HARTNETT: I think you need a meaty fish. You could do it with prawns–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Monkfish?

ANGELA HARTNETT: –but I don't think it'd be good. I think a meaty fishlike monkfish, I think something chunky. John Dory would be really good with it.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh, old John.

ANGELA HARTNETT: You know, that's a good, you know—

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —a nice thick piece.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And you can add a little bit of more seasoning, like a bit of chilli into it—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh my God.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —and really spice it up.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: I think that would work very well.

DAME MEERA SYAL: That would be nice.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: That would be very nice.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: If you want to try this dish at home, all the ingredients are available in your local Waitrose—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: —of course, or you can get them online. You can get the recipe online, [waitrose.com/dishrecipes](https://www.waitrose.com/dishrecipes).

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: There's a wine pairing as well, Ange.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yep.

NICK GRIMSHAW: What is the wine pairing to go with our fish stew?

ANGELA HARTNETT: We have a lovely Albariño, so a Spanish wine, which is a great pairing because it has all those aniseed floral notes which work well with the fennel—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —and the saffron that we have in this fish stew, and it cuts through the richness of it. Would you like wine?

DAME MEERA SYAL: No.

NICK GRIMSHAW: No.

ANGELA HARTNETT: No, are you sure?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Too early for me.

NICK GRIMSHAW: No, too early.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I'm off to see the eclipse after. It might just push me over the edge if I, uh—

[crew laughs]

[theme music plays]

NICK GRIMSHAW: I'd love to talk to you about your memoir.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Vigilauntie.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: A memoir in it—

DAME MEERA SYAL: *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: Um, and it's going to be out next week, and we can't recommend it enough—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Brilliant.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –and I love that the spelling is key to what this book is about.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: It's not vigilante, you're if you're listening to this, you'll have no idea what we're on about.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: If you're watching this, you will see. And tell us all about the, the idea, the concept of the title Vigil-auntie.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Vigilauntie, or *[in an Indian accent]* Vigilauntie–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –if you want to give them more of a clue, um, which the, my daughter came up with that title, which I thought was genius. Um, I suppose the aunties have been a very central part of my life. *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Um, when I was a little kid growing up, you know, first generation immigrants born here, the aunties were a huge presence, and they were like well, we used to call them the Illuminaunties, which gives you an idea—

[everyone laughs]

DAME MEERA SYAL: —of their, you know, their power.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And, and you would be policed, watched, slash loved—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —by this big group of matriarchs—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: -who— And you mentioned your aunties, this is not uncommon, a lot of people grow up like that, but there's this whole bunch of women and they're all entitled to tell you off, cuff you when you're naughty—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —wipe your nose and tell you how to live your life.

NICK GRIMSHAW: *[laughs]*

DAME MEERA SYAL: I had them and they scared me a bit when I was younger because a lot of their edicts were meant to shut little girls down—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –and frighten little girls.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: So, the title of the first chapter is Don't Sit with Your Legs Apart–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –because that was said to me all the time–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –when I was a kid because I was a tomboy.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: But, you know, don't laugh too loudly, don't show off–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –don't look at boys–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —don't do that. That's not respectable. I mean, the whole thing about girls carrying the family honour. Now I'm talking about some of them, not all of them are like that. And I used to, they used to frighten me.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And what also frightened me is the lack of potential, the, the unfulfilled potential that I saw in them. So, you see these vibrant, amazing women that were really strong, who were leading really little lives. Had horrible husbands or doing s*** jobs they didn't want to do or were just overwhelmed by being in the country and had so many missed opportunities.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And I think a lot of women of that generation did.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: So, I'd look at them, and I'd go, I love you, but I don't want to be you. I don't want to wake up at 50 and feel like my whole life's gone because I didn't break out or I didn't say what I felt, or I didn't follow that silly little dream. So, in a way, they spurred me on. But then, of course, I became an auntie. And then you have to reassess what that label means. And that's when I began to realise how strong they were, how a lot of the things they said, you know, were from love and fear.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And that they were actually just trying to look out for me.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And now I think you can be any kind of damn auntie you want to be. It's about you defining what womanhood means to you—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —keeping the best of your culture and getting rid of the patriarchal, misogynistic—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —rubbish that is nothing to do with culture.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And that's the process I had to go through. And that's sort of the spine of, of the book.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And it's also the closeness then of the aunties, isn't it, I think?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: 'Cause that's the, you know, and I think again, it is, as you say, it's that generation. 'Cause I think my mother and her sisters and then my grandmother and her, they would all talk to me as if I was their daughter—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: –or I was–

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes.

ANGELA HARTNETT: –their granddaughter.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Right.

ANGELA HARTNETT: You know, they'd have no qualms about saying exactly those things. I remember my aunt going, you're gonna get rheumatism. I'm going, Oh brilliant, what's that about?

DAME MEERA SYAL: *[laughs]*

ANGELA HARTNETT: What have I done now? Your always– Your hair's wet–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: –you know. Why don't you put clothes on?

DAME MEERA SYAL: *[laughs]*

ANGELA HARTNETT: You're gonna catch your death. You know–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And they'd always be saying stuff and stuff. And you'll think, you're not my mum, but you had to take it anyway.

DAME MEERA SYAL: You did.

ANGELA HARTNETT: It didn't matter what they said to you. It really resonated with me, a lot of what, and also, I love the airmail.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh.

ANGELA HARTNETT: When you talked about that, that brought a tear to my eye when you talked about how your mum would receive a letter and if the corner was off, it was sad news.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: I just thought that was so— 'Cause my mum's always written and I remember the airmails, but I think if I said to a kid in my restaurant now, “What's airmail?” They wouldn't know what it is.

NICK GRIMSHAW: No.

DAME MEERA SYAL: They'd have no idea.

ANGELA HARTNETT: It is no it's so-

DAME MEERA SYAL: Can you imagine? They she was—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Ye ah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: They were so lonely—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —you know. It's just 1960, '61. We don't think about it now. We just pick up the phone, and we can talk to anyone—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —anywhere. They, they didn't have a phone—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —and even if they had one, they couldn't afford an international call.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: So, the airmail letters were the only thing you had.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And of course, if there was some terrible news, somebody you loved died, you wouldn't know about it for 2 weeks.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: But you get the letter, and it was a little sign that they'd tear the corner, so you knew before opening it you were going to read something really sad—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —so you could brace yourself. And I found that so moving. Yeah, I'm glad that resonated with you.

NICK GRIMSHAW: We should talk about some of the things that people will have fallen in love with you over. Um, we need to talk about Goodness Gracious Me, talk about the Kumars as well. In Meet the Kumars at No. 42, you played a grandma, but you were age of 40 when you played a grandma in that show.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah, I know.

NICK GRIMSHAW: That's ridiculous.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I know, I know. But it was such a good part.

NICK GRIMSHAW: 40!

DAME MEERA SYAL: I couldn't say no to it. I'd need less makeup now, obviously—

NICK GRIMSHAW: *[laughs]*

DAME MEERA SYAL: —a lot less.

NICK GRIMSHAW: As if.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Aw please.

DAME MEERA SYAL: That's always true. Well, I got cast basically in a nutshell because the character needed a lot of improvisational skills—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —and they did audition much older women—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —you know, age-appropriate—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Grandmas.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —women for that role. And they just weren't, they couldn't do the improv—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —probably not in the training they had at that time.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And once I'd seen the parts and I thought, this is the best part—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –this sort of hand grenade–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –of a granny in the middle of this Indian family who is the exact opposite of what people think old women should be.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Uh-huh.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Provocative, mischievous–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –flirty–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –you know, internet savvy.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Gets away with flirting with every male guest because you can–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –because you're a granny.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And I'd be mad to turn this down.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I mean, it was a bit weird that the man I would go on to marry was playing my grandson, but–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, there is that.

[everyone laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: That's acting, isn't it?

ANGELA HARTNETT: That's acting.

NICK GRIMSHAW: That's acting.

DAME MEERA SYAL: We'll–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: We'll move swiftly from that.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Well some incredible guests on that–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –some great guests that we've had on–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –Dish as well, like Gordon Ramsay, Graham Norton–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –Mel B, Helena Bonham Carter–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –um, the Dish of Dish, Martin Kemp.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Martin Kemp–

DAME MEERA SYAL: Martin Kemp

ANGELA HARTNETT: –love Martin Kemp. Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: The Dish of Dish.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, we were–

ANGELA HARTNETT: My crush.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –lost in the eyes–

ANGELA HARTNETT: My crush.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –of Martin Kemp–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Get it.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –and stuff.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: But we–

DAME MEERA SYAL: And Donny Osmond. My crush.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Donny Osmond.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Donny Osmond, Donny Osmond. But we heard that it was Queen Elizabeth's favourite show.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Apparently.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Really?

NICK GRIMSHAW: That I'm obsessed with.

ANGELA HARTNETT: That is brilliant.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I know this wasn't said to me, but it was said to Sanjeev. I wonder if we can talk about it now. She's no longer with us—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —but apparently yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Wow.

DAME MEERA SYAL: She was asked, in fact, the report, no, it wasn't Sanjeev, it was a reporter who then passed it on to Sanjeev, who was interviewing Her Maj.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And just as a finishing question, “What are you watching at the moment? What's your favourite programme?” And she said *[in a Posh accent]* “I'd rather like that Kumars at No. 42, that old lady, she's very funny.”

NICK GRIMSHAW: I'm obsessed with that.

ANGELA HARTNETT: *[laughs]*

DAME MEERA SYAL: And, um, so when I—

ANGELA HARTNETT: I love that.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —met her next, which I did luckily, I said, I absolutely know why you like her. She's an older woman with agency. And I think you know a bit about that.

[everyone laughs]

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh yeah, of course.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Actually, the shows that really last are the ones that are universal.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Do you know what I mean? It's like it was about a family at the end of the day.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: We've all got them.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: We've all got embarrassing families.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Right. And I think that's why that format just worked so well. And we never wanted to embarrass the guests. We were going to be a typical Indian family who, when you get a guest, your guest is God.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, of course yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: You feed them, and you pet them, and you praise them.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: We might ask you to unblock the downstairs loo as well—

[everyone laughs]

DAME MEERA SYAL: But go with it!

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, just go with it.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Go with it. So, the guests couldn't do their usual spiel like you do on other chat shows. They were completely, that look of shock was real because they never met us before they walked in that door.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: We had the cameras rolling, and that was the thrill of it. I mean, to get a job that is sort of, you know, you're on screen but you're actually also a theatre performer—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, of course.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Because you don't know how they're going to respond.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It's just brilliant, brilliant to do.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Such a good show.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And it was great for every generation.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: It didn't feel like something your mum watched.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, yeah. You'd watch it as a family.

ANGELA HARTNETT: You could all watch it together—

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: For sure.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —and that's what was brilliant about it. I loved it.

NICK GRIMSHAW: You would watch it as a family. Yeah. And we also, I mean, we've got to mention Goodness Gracious Me.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh my gosh yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: We must. Um, I mean, when I knew you were coming on, it was like my brain was just drawn to the 'We're Going for an English'--

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah of course yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: --sketch because I was thinking of a dinner and going for it.

DAME MEERA SYAL: *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: And I remember, I actually remember watching that with my brother on the telly and like us both like howling--

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: --about like the--

ANGELA HARTNETT: It's the is the best.

NICK GRIMSHAW: --I'll have the blandest thing on the menu.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: So

DAME MEERA SYAL: “24 plates of chips!”

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, yeah, exactly. *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: *[laughs]* It was so good. I mean, what are your memories of starting out on that—

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: —because it started on, on Radio 4, right?

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes. Well, gosh, it just, it took so long to get on—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —because people didn't know what the hell it was.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: To be fair, neither did we, but the concept of Asians being funny was just not on anyone's horizon. Oh no, you're the doctors, you're the shopkeepers.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: You're not cool and you're not funny, right?

NICK GRIMSHAW: Right.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And so, when we first approached—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —the BBC to do it, I mean, he says, he swears he never says this, and maybe he didn't, but the producer's first words were, “Are Asians funny?”

[everyone laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: Well, that's in the book, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Are Asians funny, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And maybe that was the subtext of what you said.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah right.

DAME MEERA SYAL: But anyway, and I thought, I don't blame you—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —because what else have you seen of us—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –on television anywhere?

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: The image of us is just, you know, so stereotyped.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Um, and so we didn't know ourselves, but we were all doing comedy in different places–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –around London. There was this huge underground South Asian comedy scene from the first generation like us–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –but it was just ours.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah of course, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: No one else had seen it. So, we just piled our stuff together. We put on a live show in 5 days at the Riverside Studios. Invited the producer along and he went, “Oh, I see what you mean.”

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Right.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And to his credit, he said, “It's not my culture—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I don't know what some of the words mean.”

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: “But I can see that other people do, and I can see that some of it is very funny.”

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And to their credit, they never interfered. And Going for an English is the sketch that everybody remembers—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —because most people's relationship or meeting of a South Asian person would be in an Indian restaurant—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, yeah. Of course.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —actually if you didn't have mates who were South Asian and it all it did was turn a mirror and go, we do see you.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: *[laughs]*

DAME MEERA SYAL: We do see how you behave in the restaurant.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: We do but then we also took the piss out of ourselves.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes, of course, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And that's why I think it was quite a joyous show and why it's still relevant—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —and remembered.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Right, I'm going to get dessert.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh my God—

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yay dessert.

NICK GRIMSHAW: —are we actually at dessert. Oh my God.

[theme music plays]

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh, thank you. That looks amazing.

ANGELA HARTNETT: I'm hoping it's chewy.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh, that looks so good.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh. Um—

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: We're hoping.

ANGELA HARTNETT: I'm not sure I've quite delivered, but it's—

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh, my goodness.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Thank you, Ange.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And it's cherry. How did you know that I love cherries? Did you just, you just psychically picked that up, didn't you?

NICK GRIMSHAW: We just knew, we just knew.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It's so beautiful.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Thank you, Ange. Oh my God, looks so good, Ange. Should we do this meringue?

ANGELA HARTNETT: And then we have—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh my God, Meera's cake as well.

ANGELA HARTNETT: –Meera's cake as well.

DAME MEERA SYAL: You don't, I mean, if you hate it–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Don't, don't talk the cake down.

ANGELA HARTNETT: We will eat it.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –if you hate it, if you hate it–

ANGELA HARTNETT: No.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –don't say it on camera.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I will eat it. And I will like it.

ANGELA HARTNETT: We're all gonna eat it.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh, I think it's going to be chewy.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh yes.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Happy?

[crew laughs]

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh yeah, I've just got to–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm, mm.

[crew laughs]

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh my God.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mwah. Huge fan. So very happy.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Wow.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Aw, there's some to take home now.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Wow, that is good.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Isn't food great?

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Phew.

NICK GRIMSHAW: That is so good, Ange.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh.

NICK GRIMSHAW: It's almost like— Oh is there tahini in it?

ANGELA HARTNETT: I put tahini in the cream.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh.

ANGELA HARTNETT: 'Cause I'll be honest with you, Meera.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It's genius.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes.

ANGELA HARTNETT: There were a few little mishaps—

NICK GRIMSHAW: What, like what?

ANGELA HARTNETT: —when I made it this morning.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: One, I was supposed to have put the tahini through the meringue. I forgot to do that. And then I, we'd weighed the sugar wrong. Anyway, there was a few little things. And when I first tasted them, I said, these aren't chewy enough.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And then—

DAME MEERA SYAL: You made a second batch?

ANGELA HARTNETT: Well, no, then Sarah and I had a little, “You've got to serve them.” “I'm not serving them.” “You've got to serve them.”

[crew laughs]

ANGELA HARTNETT: Anyway. And then I said, “You know what we'll do? We'll put them back in the oven for another 30 minutes and we'll try them.”

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: So that's how—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —we've worked out how to make them chewy. We just put them in the oven another 30 minutes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: That is so good they're delicious. They're almost like caramelly.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes, they are.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And so that's saying, you know, so now we just have to figure out to make that into a recipe—

[crew laughs]

ANGELA HARTNETT: —that works, and it'll be fine. *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: Do the recipe twice.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, do it twice.

DAME MEERA SYAL: What is the secret?

NICK GRIMSHAW: Wait they are so caramelly.

DAME MEERA SYAL: They are. What's the secret to getting a chewy meringue? Is it a long time on a very, very low heat?

ANGELA HARTNETT: I think it's long and low.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And I think, and there is a way of, you do, there's tricks you can do. Add a teaspoon of lemon juice. Add some cornflour into it. We've all done that where we thought, I've forgotten about it.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: They've forgotten the meringue, and then that's when it's at its most chewiness, I think, because you've slightly overcooked it.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Because I've seen a recipe where you actually put the oven on high—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —turn it off, put the meringue in—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Right.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –and leave it overnight.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And did that work?

NICK GRIMSHAW: I've seen that.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Ish.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Ish.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It didn't, but it was very flat.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It was chewy, but it was flat.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Right, it's flat.

NICK GRIMSHAW: That is perfect.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Okay.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It's delicious. I love cherries.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I'm just gonna have to have Meera's cake as well.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I'm gonna hide.

NICK GRIMSHAW: So, what have we got? A polenta and lemon.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Lemon polenta.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I'll take this. I'll take this one. I don't know why I did that. It's quite weird how I did— Oh no.

DAME MEERA SYAL: *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: Made a disaster there, guys. Oh no, I've got my plate in the camera.

[everyone laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: So sorry. I'm so sorry. Disaster.

ANGELA HARTNETT: It's fine.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh no, this looks good, Meera.

ANGELA HARTNETT: This does look good.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Does it?

ANGELA HARTNETT: It looks really lovely.

DAME MEERA SYAL: This is very nerve— I'm not even gonna look at you.

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm. Oh no, that's so good.

ANGELA HARTNETT: It's delicious.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Is it really?

ANGELA HARTNETT: It really is.

NICK GRIMSHAW: It really is delicious.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Is it really?

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I promise you.

ANGELA HARTNETT: It's really lovely.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh no, that is really good.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And do you put a syrup on top after?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh, it's so good.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: You make loads of tiny little holes—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And you've got to be really slow.

ANGELA HARTNETT: It's so lovely and moist.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: That's delicious. That'd be nice with a cup of tea.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh, thank you.

ANGELA HARTNETT: It would be. No, but that's, it's the perfect tea cake.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Wouldn't it. Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: It is.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I like the texture.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh my God.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Good, good, good.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Phew, what relief.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Wow, guys, you two should open a bakery.

ANGELA HARTNETT: *[laughs]*

DAME MEERA SYAL: *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Do you know, that would be my dream job.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Why don't you?

DAME MEERA SYAL: A bakery/bookshop.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh, my friend and I was talking about that. She wants to open a bookshop.

DAME MEERA SYAL: A bakery/bookshop. And could we have a tarot reader on the side?

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Or a palm reader or something.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Those three things would be—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —I think there's something there.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I'd be up for that.

ANGELA HARTNETT: I'd go to that.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Maybe I could do tarot.

ANGELA HARTNETT: You could do the tarot.

NICK GRIMSHAW: You do the cake.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: Ange does meringues.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Do you do tarot?

NICK GRIMSHAW: No.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh.

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: I could learn.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Just pretend. *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: One thing we wanted to do was share some of your big headline achievements.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Right.

NICK GRIMSHAW: But also, I love to celebrate in like the sort of the big, small stuff too.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Um, so for example, in 2023 you were made a BAFTA Fellow.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Incredible.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: The highest accolade. But you're also excellent at netball.

[crew laughs]

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Love that. Excellent at netball, yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: And you've been playing since you were 11.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I know. How mad is that?

NICK GRIMSHAW: Love.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I know.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And you're still playing. Brilliant.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I played last night.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh, I love that.

DAME MEERA SYAL: *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: Love that.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I know—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —I still love it. Still love it. I mean, I'm slower now—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: But you're still doing it. Love that.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –I might be grading down to walking that ball in a few years–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: -but I'm still-

ANGELA HARTNETT: No, it's still brilliant you're doing that.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Another excellent accolade, your first novel Anita and Me, so successful it's used in the school curriculum.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes–

NICK GRIMSHAW: That's good, guys.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –it is.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Um, you also have a very impressive collection of suns.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I do.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Like, not children–

DAME MEERA SYAL: *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: –like–

[crew laughs]

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –suns in the sky.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It's–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Because I noticed your sun necklace before, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I have loads of these.

NICK GRIMSHAW: loads of suns.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Well, ceramic ones–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –that I've collected from all different places. I mean, they've taken years because each one's got a little story–

NICK GRIMSHAW: Uh-huh.

DAME MEERA SYAL: –to it.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Aw.

DAME MEERA SYAL: But I'm just a bit obsessed—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —with suns and sunflowers.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Aw lovely.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I don't know, there's something about the happy openness of them—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —the fact that they follow the sun.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: That's what I had my wedding bouquet, just sunflowers.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Aw.

NICK GRIMSHAW: That's why you're buzzing for the eclipse.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, exactly yeah.

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: It's back, it's back, it's back, it's back. Um, you have BAFTA nominations for your TV work, also an Olivier Award nomination as well. Um, but more impressively, you said that you were a mermaid in a past life.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I think I was.

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: You think you were?

DAME MEERA SYAL: I think I-

NICK GRIMSHAW: What's led you to—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: —thinking this?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Because the happiest place for me is in water.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It's just—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —I just make for water whenever I can.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Um, it's not holiday for me unless I can swim in the sea. And I don't know, I just, I, yeah, I'm half aquatic.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Half aquatic.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And I quite like the idea of never having to shave my legs again. So—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Quite good to be a mermaid.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, great.

ANGELA HARTNETT: No, but I'm like that. I need, if the sea's there, I have to go.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I have to get in it.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Have to.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: What do you think you were in a past life? Because someone messaged me the other day saying, I think you were an ancient Egyptian, because they said that the way that I talked about something, and they said they specialise in it, and they said, I think that's actually a hangover from your previous life in ancient Egypt.

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: Obviously I was like, immediate follow.

[everyone laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: My kind of person. Yeah, so—

ANGELA HARTNETT: It's me that said that to you.

NICK GRIMSHAW: —Meera, a mermaid. Me, some sort of ancient Egyptian.

ANGELA HARTNETT: I'd like to think in my previous life—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Here we go.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —I lived in the era of The Great Gatsby.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh.

ANGELA HARTNETT: I'm drawn to— I love throwing parties.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Negronis.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, I like that idea of dancing. I'd have actually smoked then.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: What?

ANGELA HARTNETT: I've never smoked in my life.

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: You can't say you like parties for the fags.

[everyone laughs]

ANGELA HARTNETT: They all have those long cigarettes, don't they?

DAME MEERA SYAL: The look of it.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: The really long cigars but I've never smoked in my life, so— but I think I would have done that.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh, maybe that's what's drawing you in there.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, you see yeah you see.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: A previous life.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And I like the idea of that you just hanging around and just sitting there having a drink—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —talking to Zelda, as you do.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah, exchanging witty banter.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Exactly.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: I think the Roaring '20s—

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —that I think would be a great era.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, doing the Charleston.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, I'd love that. Chu chu chu.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: *[laughs]*

ANGELA HARTNETT: *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: I can see it; I can see it. Also, in your impressive list of incredible achievements, you worked with Jack Black, you've had a number one single.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh, well, it—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Love.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —it was a, it was a Comic Relief single.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Still, still.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Scrap that, you've had a number one single.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, and you also make an incredible lemon polenta cake.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Aw.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Wow come on.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes, lock that in, thank you.

[theme music plays]

NICK GRIMSHAW: Are you ready for your fast-food quiz? It's quick fire.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh, right.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Are you ready?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes, come on.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Are you ready.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Okay, Meera, please tell us your favourite way to eat eggs.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Poached.

ANGELA HARTNETT: What's your favourite sandwich filling?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh, mature cheese, salad, and pickle.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Nice.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm. Uh, what's your favourite form of potato?

DAME MEERA SYAL: *[whispers]* I don't like potatoes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: You don't like potatoes.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Okay no.

NICK GRIMSHAW: No potatoes.

DAME MEERA SYAL: No.

ANGELA HARTNETT: She's very—

NICK GRIMSHAW: What about jacket potato?

DAME MEERA SYAL: No.

ANGELA HARTNETT: No.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh, I like the skin.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: The skin.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Okay.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Crispy, skin of a jacket potato—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Okay.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —thank you.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Love that. Favourite herb?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh no, that's hard.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Coriander.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Um, do you have a favourite kitchen utensil?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yes, my Thermomix.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh yes.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh, nice. Okay.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Uh, what's your favourite fruit?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Blueberry.

ANGELA HARTNETT: What is your favourite toast topping?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Marmite and butter.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Marmite and butter, nice.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Um, what do you think is the best nut?

DAME MEERA SYAL: I think walnut.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh, that's very, mm, walnut. Favourite ice cream?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Mango sorbet.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, oh yeah, mango—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —sorbet is good.

NICK GRIMSHAW: What's your favourite childhood dish?

DAME MEERA SYAL: I think my mum's paronhi, stuffed paronhi—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —and saag paneer.

ANGELA HARTNETT: We want that.

NICK GRIMSHAW: We do want that, yeah, we do want that, yeah. Finally, favourite condiment?

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Chilli peanut sauce.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh, good one. Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It goes with everything.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Everything.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, really good.

DAME MEERA SYAL: I put it on toasted sandwiches.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: On bread.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Great on eggs.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: I love that.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Like that one.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, very good one.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Good one. You passed.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Did I pass?

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah, you passed.

DAME MEERA SYAL: That was like mastermind.

ANGELA HARTNETT: *[laughs]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: Very much so.

[theme music plays]

NICK GRIMSHAW: It's time for your end of the show question.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Right.

NICK GRIMSHAW: For your chance to win the Waitrose goodie bag—

DAME MEERA SYAL: *[gasps]*

NICK GRIMSHAW: —all you've got to do is—

DAME MEERA SYAL: Look at that.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –answer this.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Saucy!

NICK GRIMSHAW: Questions.

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: Saucy!

ANGELA HARTNETT: Saucy!

NICK GRIMSHAW: Saucy bag! To win the Waitrose goodie bag. A couple of questions.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Uh, firstly, what is the Dame Meera method for making tea?

DAME MEERA SYAL: For making tea?

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Um, full details on how to make it and what people do wrong in your opinion.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Well, the water's got to be absolutely boiling.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yorkshire tea only.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Let it sit for a bit.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Not until the tannin's formed but let it sit. Don't just whip it out already.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Then put the milk in and put it in slowly so you get it to the colour you want. And then give the tea bag a little tap with a spoon.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Don't squeeze it before you remove it.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Oh.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And that should be the right colour.

NICK GRIMSHAW: That is detailed.

DAME MEERA SYAL: But it's got to be—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Wow.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —hot and it's like my men, hard and strong.

[everyone laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: And secondly.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Please could you share your recipe for the lemon polenta cake, please?

DAME MEERA SYAL: Oh my gosh, off by heart. Oh, I can't remember. I think it's—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Lemon.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Lemon, polenta.

DAME MEERA SYAL: It's lemon polenta and ground almonds.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yes.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And butter.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: And 3 eggs—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —and, uh, the rind of 3 lemons.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Nice.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Into the mixture. And then when the cake's warm, take it out, leave it in the tin, prick it all over—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —very tiny little pinholes, and make it with the juice of the 3 lemons, make the syrup—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —with icing sugar.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Let that cool a bit, and then don't just slop it on—

NICK GRIMSHAW: No.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —'cause that's what people do wrong. Pour a little bit on gently, and with a little pastry brush—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm, glaze it over. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Keep doing it, it takes time—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —but if you want the juice to go right to the bottom—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —you got to do that.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Okay, there we go.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And that has gone right to the bottom.

NICK GRIMSHAW: It's gone right to the bottom of it, perfect.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Very good, perfect.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I think the goodie bag is yours.

[applause]

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes!

DAME MEERA SYAL: Yay!

NICK GRIMSHAW: That was good. The goodie bag is yours, although that is ours.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Of course—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Unfortunately.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes.

DAME MEERA SYAL: —absolutely yours.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Um, Meera, thank you so much.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Thank you so much.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Thank you.

NICK GRIMSHAW: That was so nice.

ANGELA HARTNETT: You were brilliant.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Thanks for hanging out. Thank you.

DAME MEERA SYAL: Such a pleasure.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Thank you.

NICK GRIMSHAW: A round of applause for Meera, everybody

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes.

[cheering and applause]

NICK GRIMSHAW: Thank you.

[theme music plays]

NICK GRIMSHAW: She's great.

ANGELA HARTNETT: She was amazing.

NICK GRIMSHAW: I love her.

ANGELA HARTNETT: I loved her. I loved her.

NICK GRIMSHAW: She's—

ANGELA HARTNETT: I want to be her friend.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Same.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: She was so nice to hang out with.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah, and I think anyone I've spoken to ever about her, who's met her, say she's so understated and just a lovely—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —person.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Yeah.

ANGELA HARTNETT: And I liked her thing that she has all these suns—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —you know, it's like all around her—

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: —you know, all have little stories.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Mm-hm.

ANGELA HARTNETT: I think she's quite, um—

NICK GRIMSHAW: I like to outlook on everything—

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes, yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –and the way that she sort of–

ANGELA HARTNETT: I think, yeah, she was brilliant.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Loved her.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Loved her.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Um, so thank you to–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –Dame Meera Syal–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –for joining us. Before we say bye, we have a bit of Dish business–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –to attend to. Dishness, if you will.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Oh, crikey.

NICK GRIMSHAW: That doesn't work. Uh, a few comments–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –uh, to address and points of order. Firstly, in the Tom–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –Holland episode, we had a lot of comments on YouTube about the Indian dessert you described–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Mm.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –which is like batter piped into–

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –hot fat. You couldn't remember the name.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: It was Jalebi.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yes!

NICK GRIMSHAW: Jalebi.

ANGELA HARTNETT: That's what it is. Yes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Um, so lots of people saying–

ANGELA HARTNETT: That's what it was.

NICK GRIMSHAW: –that's what it is.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Yeah.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Jalebi. Also from our Tom Holland episode, Bryony from Essex said, “I found the conversation about the pronunciation of Lionel Messi.”

ANGELA HARTNETT: Lionel.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Lionel

ANGELA HARTNETT: Lionel

NICK GRIMSHAW: Messi

ANGELA HARTNETT: Lionel.

[crew laughs]

NICK GRIMSHAW: “Really funny. And I had to say, as a non-football-y type person, I also pronounce it the same way as Nick, even if it's the wrong way. Lionel Messi. However, after I finished listening to your episode, I listened to the latest episode of Louis Theroux Podcast with Olivia Wilde as the guest. And at the end, they spoke about celebrities with literary namesakes, Olivia having one, and then mentioned how Lionel Messi is actually named after Lionel Richie. So, I Googled this and it's true, his mum was a huge fan apparently. So actually, I think the way that we pronounce it is correct,” says Bryony. Well, thank you, Bryony. If you do want to get in contact with us at Dish, you can email us dish@waitrose.co.uk –

[theme music begins to play]

NICK GRIMSHAW: –and Angela will reply to you personally.

ANGELA HARTNETT: I will.

NICK GRIMSHAW: But thank you for listening. Thank you for watching. We will see you next week with Daisy Edgar-Jones. If that episode has left you wanting more, find us on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Just search Dish.

ANGELA HARTNETT: If you want to make any of the meals I cook on Dish, head to waitrose.com/dishrecipes for all the ingredients and the recipes.

NICK GRIMSHAW: Email your questions, thoughts, and suggestions to dish@waitrose.co.uk.

ANGELA HARTNETT: Dish from Waitrose is a Cold Glass production.

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